



Photos by Daniel P. Creighton, The Mercury morning for a stabbing suspect. The stabbing occurred shortly after he was transported by ambulance to Memorial Park where he was

ious after stabbing



Pottstown Officer Charles McClincy and Sgt. Bob Thomas and North Coventry Officer Joe Campbell examine the scene of the stabbing at a second-floor construction area of a home on York Street.

Official says longterm cancer risk concern of Bally water contamination

By Michelle Karas
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BALLY — Until recently, no one knew how to test for a toxic substance that borough residents have unknowingly been drinking for years, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But one month ago, the federal agency used new technology to test Bally's municipal water supply and confirmed the presence of 1,4-dioxane, a solvent used in manufacturing that has been classified as a "probable carcinogen" by the EPA.

Mitch Cron, an EPA remedial project manager, related the story of the water contamination to a crowd of 250 borough residents gathered at the Bally firehouse Wednesday evening.

The story begins with Bally Case and Cooler, a refrigerator manufacturing firm formerly located on Route 100 in the borough. The company later became Bally Engineering Structures, was bought by Sunbeam Corp., and is now called American Household Inc.

Bally Engineering Structures used industrial solvents including TCE and TCA, and "through the handling of possible mishandling of these solvents, these solvents impacted Bally's groundwater," Cron said.

Over time, the solvents got into the borough's groundwater, contaminating the well that provides Bally's drinking water, he said.

"The contamination really wasn't dumped, it really was just as a result of the operations — the way solvents were handled historically," said Ken Miller, a representative of American Household Inc.

The Bally Groundwater Contamination Superfund Site was identified in the 1980s. In 1989, the EPA ordered the responsible party, American Household Inc., to address the TCE and TCA contamination. The solution — which is still done today — was to strip the water of the solvents using an air stripper, treat it with chlorine and circulate it to the residents.

Only recently has the EPA gained the technology to analyze water for 1,4-dioxane, which is typically discovered where TCA is found because it is used to stabilize TCA, Cron said.

The tests in Bally revealed levels of 1,4-dioxane in the range of 29 to 52 parts per billion. A high level of 1,4-dioxane is 600 parts per billion, and a level where no EPA response is required is six

parts per billion, Cron said. However, there is no federal or state standard for 1,4-dioxane in drinking water, he said.

"You can't guarantee me that I haven't been consuming that for 20 years," said Collette Stitt, a borough resident.

To remedy the 1,4-dioxane contamination, the EPA decided to reduce the number of 1,4-dioxane parts per billion.

"Longterm cancer risk is the primary concern," said Jennifer Hubbard, an EPA toxicologist, who noted 1,4-dioxane presents the highest risk when it is ingested. Washing with or inhaling water vapors during showers isn't much of a risk, she said.

"It doesn't like to vaporize, so the risk is low from skin contact," Hubbard said. "You're best risk reduction is going to be using bottled water for drinking."

A public health assessment of the Bally site completed in 1993 analyzed cancer in the area from 1973 to 1983 and found "no significant differences from the state as a whole," said Tom Stokus, a representative of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Stokus agreed with residents who said it might be time to do an updated study.

Residents were also concerned about watering their pets with borough water.

"I don't see a special need for concern about pets," Hubbard said, noting she will look into the effects on different types of animals.

To remedy the situation, American Household Inc. plans to research, engineer and install a new well in a new location and pump its water to Bally. If that doesn't work, the company will treat the water contaminated with 1,4-dioxane.

While borough residents wait the six to 12 months it may take to implement a solution, they may safely continue to drink the borough water. According to the EPA, six more months of drinking the contaminated water isn't going to up anyone's risk of cancer. However, for residents who request it and both schools in the area, American Household Inc. will provide bottled water.

Cron said the EPA will update residents about the situation by mail. Anyone with questions may call the EPA's 24-hour Hotline at 1-800-353-2509 and leave a message. Information is also available on the Superfund Web site, www.epa.gov/superfund.

Spaghetti dinner benefit planned

BARTO — A spaghetti dinner to benefit Mothers Against Drunk Driving will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. on April 5 at the Barto Fire Co., Old Route 100.

AR500009